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RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8233
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3026
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 2144
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 6014
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 5822
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2423
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU
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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL
JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

TUESDAY, JULY 17, 2007

In Today's Papers

Parliamentary Election Campaign

All papers: Campaigning intensifies as the July 22 election approaches, with party leaders holding rallies across the country and trading verbal shots. Addressing people in the Black Sea city of Ordu, DP leader Agar accused the ruling AKP of corruption and said when AKP complains it is playing the victim role. Attending his party's rally in the eastern city of Igdır, CHP leader Baykal criticized the government's counterterrorism policies. Speaking at MHP rally in the central-southern city of Gaziantep, Devlet Bahceli said that when he comes to power he will have the AKP government tried for all the irregularities. AKP leader PM Erdogan said yesterday that his party will emerge from the elections on top.

In an election snapshot from the southeastern city of Van, tabloid Aksam reports that the mainly Kurdish DTP is carrying out its election campaign through independent candidates and that the voters there have made their minds up. As for the result, the paper predicts two possibilities for the seven seats from Van: three independents and two each from AKP and CHP; or three independents, three for AKP and one for CHP. In the last election AKP won six seats in Van.

Turkey-Iran Gas Deal; US Reaction

All papers report that the United States has voiced a clear objection to a deal signed between Turkey and Iran on energy cooperation while reiterating that Washington is ready to continue joint efforts which will eventually make Turkey an energy hub for European countries. Mainstream Sabah, Milliyet and Vatan, Islamist oriented Zaman and others quote the US Embassy spokesperson as saying "we are against any kind of cooperation with Iran. Relying on Iran as a source and transit country for natural gas seems unwise." Sabah reports that, with regard to the US reaction over the gas deal, FM Gul said 'Turkey will not listen to anyone. The import thing is our interests.' Morning TV broadcasts quoted State

Department spokesman Sean McCormack as saying "It is up to the Turkish Government, Turkish entities to decide whether or not they want to do business with Iran at this point in time. If you ask our opinion, if we think it is the right moment to be making investments in the Iranian oil and gas sector, no, we don't think so."

US Denies Giving Weapons to PKK

Sabah, Milliyet, Zaman and others: Responding to the questions from journalists aboard AKP's election bus, FM Gul said that he received an answer from the US that "it is not possible that the US gave weapons to a terrorist organization; however, the weapons we provided to the Iraqi army might be acquired by the PKK due to financial, ethnic or ideological reasons." Gul added that "the US administration said that they would closely follow the issue from now on and this incident shows that the Iraqi army is not reliable."

Gul also noted that the terrorist organization might have been doing this in order to damage relations between Turkey and the US.

Talabani Threatens to Cut Business Relations with Turkey

Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reported that Iraqi leader Talabani's party Kurdistan Patriotic Union Ankara Representative Behroz Gelali said that in case of Turkish intervention in Northern Iraq, they will cut business relations with the 1200 Turkish companies in Iraq and send them back to Turkey.

Editorial Opinion: Iraq, US-Turkey Relations

Fikret Bila comments in the mainstream Milliyet: "If the allegation about the US providing weapons to the PKK is verified, it will undoubtedly cause Turkish-US relations to deteriorate to a non-repairable point. But even if this allegation is proven wrong, the main question is whether we will be able to close the case. Simply disproving the allegation will not do any good toward resolving the essence of the problem. A terrorist organization like

ANKARA 00001817 002 OF 002

the PKK is capable of acquiring weapons and arms through traffickers and through the Iraqi peshmerge. This is in fact the initial information coming from the US. Therefore Turkey should not focus on the US-weapons-to-PKK allegation. The main issue that we should focus on is forcing the US to change its political stance on support [for Kurds]."

Kubilay Celik comments in the nationalist Tercuman: "The US is now looking for ways to make its position [in Iraq] permanent and Iraq's north seems to be the best option. Barzani has already been issuing 'invitations' for an American army presence. A military base in Northern Iraq will not only serve American regional interests but also it will be like an insurance policy for Barzani against a possible cross-border operation by Turkey."

TV Highlights
NTV, 7.00 A.M.

Domestic News

Nine people have been taken into custody after staging protests and throwing eggs at CHP leader Deniz Baykal in Erzurum.

In response to accusation of CHP with regard to his sons' assets, Environment and Forestry Minister Osman Pepe said that his three sons only have 5 apartment flats, not 600.

Istanbul 2nd district independent candidate Tuncay Seyranlioglu died in an armed attack when he came out of the wedding hall that he owned.

International News

The UK decided to expel four Russian diplomats over Moscow's refusal to extradite the main suspect in the murder of Alexander Litvinenko.

Bombs killed at least 85 in Kirkuk

A 6.8 magnitude earthquake rocked Japan's northwest coast on Monday killing at least 8 people, injuring hundreds and damaging a nuclear reactor.

WILSON